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FEATURES OF OUR

FAITH,
POSITION AND
PRACTICES

PLAIN INSTRUCTIONS

Intended primarily for Candidates for Confirmation.

ANGELICUM SOCIETY OF CANADA
GENERAL PRINCIPLES

BY

J. C. DAVIDSON, M. A.

Rector of Peterborough.

Introductory

In every parish many persons of mature years will be found who, while ready to present themselves for Confirmation, are prevented by circumstances from attending the preparatory Classes. For them the following instructions are designed, though they may possibly also be found helpful to others.

One of the great incidental blessings of Confirmation is the opportunity thereby afforded of definite teaching in regard to the 'Catholic Faith,' the practices of personal Religion, and the position of the Church.

Where such information can be given, the fortunate recipients should have a clear understanding henceforth of their Belief, Position, and Duty, and be equipped for all emergencies.

For this purpose our Church sets forth her Catechism ; and while older persons cannot be expected to learn it by rote, they should certainly investigate the different great Truths expounded therein, viz.:—The Christian Covenant, Christian Duty, Christian Creed, Christian Prayer, and Christian Sacraments. An attempt to deal practically with these points is made in the following pages, —which should be read slowly and thoughtfully, the scriptural references being carefully examined.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation means the act of making firm—of strengthening.

It is this in two respects : (1) God confirming us by His Holy Spirit, the Comforter or Strengthener : (2) we confirming the promises made at Baptism. Of these the first is the more important and the only Scriptural part : let us consider it.

THE GIFT OF CONFIRMATION

Read Acts viii. 5-18. Notice here that a Deacon preaches Christ ; people believe and are baptised (v. 12). But this is not enough (v. 16), so the Deacon stands aside, and Apostles (i.e. Bishops) confirm by means of the laying on of hands* and prayer (v. 15-17). Result, the Holy Ghost is given, (v. 17).

Another Confirmation. See Acts xix. 1-6. Same outward means used, same result follows (v. 6). But we have no instance of Confirmation being administered by any but members of the highest order in the Ministry.

See also Hebrews vi. 1-2, where confirmation is placed among the "principles of the doctrine of Christ."

*NOTE—All through the Bible the laying on of hands is used in connection with the conveyance of different blessings. See Gen. xlviii. 9, 14 ; Num. xxvii. 18 ; Mk. x. 16, etc.

How can we reasonably accept the other five "foundations" enumerated here (Repentance, Faith, Baptism, etc.) and reject Confirmation?

See also Ephesians i. 13.

Why should we desire in Confirmation to receive the Holy Ghost? See what He does—Jno. xvi. 7-14; xiv. 26; Acts i. 4-8; Romans viii. 26-27; Gal. v. 22. He comes first visibly into the Church—Acts ii 1-4; is given afterwards in Confirmation, Acts viii. 19.

See our Lord's promise, Lk. xi. 13. At Confirmation, in addition to the prayer of the Divinely appointed officer, the prayers of the whole congregation are concentrated upon us. Then, if ever, must we receive the promised Gift. Our Father who knows and loves us offers us this Divine help in Confirmation, coming down to support, guide and cheer us. Is it not a responsibility to reject this Heavenly Visitor, as if we did not want God's companionship, and could do without His help?

THE RATIFICATION

The second part of Confirmation (coming first in the service) is the ratification of our Baptismal vows. See Bishop's question "Do ye here . . . ratifying, etc." This is a minor and incidental feature, added at the Reformation to Confirmation, which (as in the Bible

narratives) would be complete without it. Still, it is a serious question, and requires thoughtful consideration.

Baptism involved a Covenant between God and us with promises on both sides. Our promises were made provisionally on our behalf. Now it is for us to ratify these—to 'put our own signature' to the covenant. Examine these promises.

(a) RENUNCIATION of the World, Flesh and Devil. The point at issue is this—are we content to drift along through life, driven hither and thither by different impulses of these evil powers, or are we resolved to make a determined resistance to them—to 'renounce' and give up what is wrong, as bidden by John Baptist (Matt. III.), and after example of our Lord (Matt. IV.)?

(b) Our second promise—to believe all the articles of the Christian FAITH. (See p. 8.) God has laid down a certain path of definite religious Faith—are we resolved to walk in it?

(c) Thirdly we promised to obey God's holy will and commandments. See the Ten Commandments (Exodus xx), the Sermon on the Mount (S. Matt. v., vi., vii.) etc., etc. In the Bible and through the promptings of conscience we are pointed to a definite path of DUTY to God above and man below. Are we resolved to walk in this path? Whether we accept it or no, it *is* our duty and high privilege. Only in obedience to

God's Holy Will and Commandments can we live a true and beautiful life.

THE PRIVILEGES OF BAPTISM

In Baptism we were made members of Christ (1 Cor. XII. 12, 27). (b) Children of God (Gal. III. 26, 27), (c) Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven (Rom. VIII. 17.) What does this mean? That God, instead of letting us wander in darkness, placed us in the light—instead of giving us a bad start with all against us, gave us a good one with much to help us: that He adopted us into His Family—The Church, and allowed us to grow up amid the blessed influences of the Divine Home. And although we may have not appreciated or used these privileges—although we may have gone into a 'far country,' we need not despair. We still belong to the Divine Family, and can say "I will arise and go to my Father."

It is one thing, however, to learn of our inheritance, and quite another thing to take actual possession of it. The Father has placed us in His Family, but if we would dwell there we must wear the white dress of the Family and share in its high and beautiful and holy life. We must help to maintain the family honour, and to fight the family battles. God calls us now at Confirmation from an unthinking and careless or indolent life to understand our true position, enjoy its

privileges, and face its responsibilities. Is this hard? God comes down from Heaven (in the person of the Holy Spirit) to enlighten our eyes and make us strong to do His will.

PRAYER

Members of the Divine Family are privileged to hold converse with their Father in prayer, and this converse must be suitable in (1) inward spirit, and (2) in outward form. In inward spirit effectual prayer must be earnest (Lk. xi. 9), believing (Mark ii. 24), unselfish (*Our Father*), according to the will of God (Matt. xxvi. 42), and such as we can consistently offer in the name of Christ, (Jno. xvi. 23.) The true spirit of prayer finds complete expression in the "Lord's Prayer" in which rising, as it were, to the throne of God, we pray first for His glory and then for our own proper needs.

In outward form we are to (1) pray *humbly* (realizing our unworthiness) Lk. xviii. 10. (2) pray *definitely*—in definite place (Matt. vi. 6), in definite words (Matt. vi. 9) with definite act of forgiveness (Matt. vi. 15.) (3) Pray *perseveringly* (Lk. xi. 5-8, xviii. 7.)

The Constituent parts of Prayer are these: (a) Confession, (b) Praise and thanksgiving, (c) Petitions for all things necessary for souls and bodies, (d) Intercession for the Church, friends, etc. All these should find a place in our prayers.

NOTE.—On consideration it will be seen that our PRAYER BOOK is framed on the above principles. Observe the following different parts—(a) Confession ; (b) Praise (Psalms, Canticles, etc.) ; (c) Instruction (the Lessons and Sermon) ; (d) Petitions (following Creed) ; (e) Intercessions (following 3rd Collect.) But its leading feature is that of humbly expressed but lofty *praise* coupled with petitions for God's glory and the welfare of His Church. The Prayer Book is the manual of the Christian Army assembled on parade in honour of the Divine Commander. To ensure action which shall be proper, united and effective, each soldier is instructed as to what he is to say and do. That part is expected to be taken heartily and well. But the outward form is valuable for what it enshrines. And the thoughtful, earnest worshipper will gradually come to perceive and 'catch' the spirit of calm, lofty and chastened devotion which lies behind the service, hidden from the formal and the unthinking. Omitting the Absolution, Morning or Evening Prayer may be said by a layman or by a woman. And particular parts of it may be profitably selected for private devotion.

THE FAITH

This is summarized in the Apostles' Creed which is a chart indicating the chief truths contained in the Bible.

1. Do I believe in God the loving Father and Creator?
(Mal. ii. 10.)

2. In God the Son the Saviour? As having revealed God to man, and reconciled men to God, the largest part of the Creed deals with His wonderful life and work. (See the Gospel histories.)

3. In God the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, (see p. 4.)
 4. The Holy Catholic Church. (See below.)
 5. The Communion of Saints (See p. 12.)
 6. The forgiveness of sins (1 Jno 1. 7-9.)
 7. The Resurrection of the Body (1 Cor. xv. 22-23, Matt. vi. 14.)
 8. The life everlasting (Jno. v. 24.)
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THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church was prepared by Jesus Christ as a Body in which all Christians should be united to Him, and through which He would continue His work in the world. As in the case of Adam, the body of the Church was first formed by our Lord and included the Apostles, the Seventy, and the Disciples. Then, after careful training, the commission was given "as my Father hath sent me even so send I you," (Jno. xx. 21.) Then the ranks of Apostles were filled up, (Acts 1. 26.) Then, life was breathed into the Body by the Holy Ghost on Pentecost (Acts 11.) Then the Holy Ghost was given to new converts in Confirmation (Act viii.) Then, the Church, thus filled with life, spread gradually to different parts of the world, mainly through the missionary work of St. Paul. Still, notice that it is one undivided

Catholic Church with Branches in different countries, and not intended to be divided (1 Cor. i. 13). In the second or third Century the Church spread to Britain, whither another mission was afterwards sent from Rome under Augustine A.D. 597. These two missions worked in different parts of Britain, and were finally united and organized as the National Church of England under Abp. Theodore, A.D. 673.

During the middle ages the English Church was in communion with the Church of Rome, and was influenced by it. Protests continued to be made against Papal interference and the first clause of Magna Charta declared "The Church of England shall be free."

In the sixteenth Century the Reformation was gradually accomplished. The whole body of the Church—Bishops, Priests, Deacons and People—united in purging the Church of accretions and superstitions, and in returning to a simpler and a purer faith. The Bible was translated, and the Prayer-book compiled from the Latin service-books already in use, and the Church of England—the same identical Church as before, but reformed—offered in either hand to the Anglo-Saxon race the Bible and the Prayer-book.

On the Continent of Europe and in Scotland, however, this great movement partook of the nature of a *revolution* rather than of a reformation. Instead of the Church reforming herself, the foreign Reformers

felt themselves compelled to go out of the Church, leaving behind great portions of the Christian heritage. Thus they lost the order of Bishops with their authority to ordain and confirm, the Ancient Liturgy, the Festivals and Fasts of the Christian year, and other treasures. On the other hand the Roman Church in the Council of Trent refused reformation, and daringly added new superstitions. The Church of England, therefore, took a middle position between the corruptions of Rome and the Revolutionary reaction of extreme Protestantism. She became Protestant and reformed, preaching the Word of God in its simplicity. At the same time She remained a true Branch of the Church of all ages, retaining the three-fold Ministry, the Liturgy, Sacraments and other priceless possessions of the Church Catholic.

We cannot now recount the subsequent history of the Church with all its eventful vicissitudes. Her life has been like that of a human being, not always up to the same standard but variable—sometimes weak and depressed, at others strong and vigorous. But, whether strong or weak, the Holy Spirit has always dwelt within Her, bringing the life of God into *some* contact with all members in vital connection with Her. In this Church the hands of the Lord Jesus are upraised through the ages in strengthening and blessing those who look to Him. The Church is indeed marred by

many defilements, but the Fount of cleansing is ever flowing in Her midst, and one day she shall be presented to Her Lord "a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephes. v. 27).

Are you in vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ in this His Divine Body, sharing the life, the worship, the work now, and the glory hereafter? If so, you share in the COMMUNION OF SAINTS, i.e. the fellowship between God's true children, whether members of the Church here or in Paradise.

"One family we dwell in Him
One Church above, beneath."

Let us realize this Christian fellowship in prayer for others, in words of courtesy and acts of kindness. Satan works for separation, God for union in the family. On which side are you?

THE HOLY COMMUNION

HISTORY In ancient times God taught man that He must be approached through different sacrifices. The greatest of these was that of the Passover (Ex. xii. 3) which commemorated the salvation of the first-born and the deliverance from Egypt. This great sacrifice Jesus Christ transformed into the Holy Communion (Lk. xxii. 15) which henceforth became the great Service of the Gospel, celebrated every Lord's day (xx. 7.) It was regarded as the

hearthstone of the Christian family, around which all members gathered in loving communion with God and with one another. In later ages of spiritual laxity and drought this great Service was neglectfully allowed to sink into the back-ground, and its place taken by other services (Morning and Evening Prayer) which had been originally compiled for daily use in religious communities in subordination to the great Divine Service of Holy Communion which marked the Sundays. Though this unscriptural custom is still prevalent, the Holy Communion is gradually being restored to its proper place, and in increasing numbers the Father's children gather, like the Disciples of old, to celebrate the weekly Eucharist.

All new communicants are urged to take up a right position in this important matter, and to be guided, not by custom, but by Truth. Put from you all idea of participating in the distinctive Christian Service only once a month or at still greater intervals. Such infrequent reception will prevent your coming to know the hidden inward spirit of this holy Service, and rob it of its power to influence your daily lives. We do not take only an occasional meal to strengthen our bodies, and our souls likewise need regular sustenance by feeding on the Bread of Life. You may not feel able at first to come oftener than once a fortnight, but keep the weekly celebration before you as the true

ideal to which you will aim in time to attain, thus also lending your support to the "*continual* remembrance of the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ and of the benefits we receive thereby."

ITS NATURE

The Holy Communion is a Memorial of Christ's Sacrifice, by which we bring it before ourselves, our fellow-men, and chiefly before God. In it we plead with Him, that for the sake of the crucified Saviour our sins may be forgiven and we ourselves made more fit for His life and service here and hereafter :

"For lo, between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son, our Lord." (A & M 322)

Again, the Holy Communion is a direct means by which we become united to Jesus Christ, "one with Him and He with us" (See Jno. vi. 51). In each Communion we should become less of self and more of Him, absorbing His character, His spirit. Lastly this service is intended to be the strongest bond between members of the Christian family, the highest expression of the Communion of Saints" (1 Cor. x. 17) Drawing nearer to God we are to draw nearer to our brethren.

PREPARATION

We are to examine ourselves (1 Cor. xi. 28) whether —(a) we truly repent of past sins; (b) have a lively faith in God's power and willingness to forgive those sins, and (c)

are in charity with all men. If we are not in charity with any one it is our duty to forgive him (which surely in view of the example of Jesus Christ we should be able to do) and to make a personal effort towards reconciliation (Mtt. v. 23, 24.) As a further evidence of charity the Church expects every communicant to bring some offering of money, however small, which is usually given to the poor.

Suitable prayers in preparation for the Holy Communion are the first Collect in the Service (for purity) and the "Prayer of humble access" beginning "we do not presume to come to this Thy Table."

After receiving the sacred elements (in the bare palm of the hand) offer thanksgiving and intercession. Then, if there be time, read part of the Gospels for Holy week or Communion hymns, 309-325 A. & M.

Remain in the Church at least until the Priest has retired. All should obtain for further help a "Communicants Manual," such as that by Bishop How (20c.) The course of preparation in these manuals is usually too long, and certain portions, which are found helpful, should be selected and marked for use.

THE LAYMAN'S COMMISSION

Confirmation is really an ordination to the Priesthood of the laity (1 Pet. II. 4, 5.) Henceforth you are commissioned and empowered to take your full part

towards the maintenance and extension of Christ's Kingdom on earth. Do not speak of what "*they should*" but "of what *we shall* do." In humble confidence take your position and keep it. You have been appointed an agent for the Church. Gird yourself for the work. Give your Clergyman your active sympathy and support. Give a regular weekly contribution by Envelope. Exercise your ministry in the Choir, the Sunday-school, or beside the sick-bed. Do not be afraid at times to speak for Christ and his cause—for the right and against the wrong. Invite and call for your neighbours to attend the services of the Church, and say or do something to make strangers feel at home in the Father's House. In places or families where no service is held say Morning and Evening Prayer (or at least portions of the service) yourself, and ask others to join you. And while you are thus doing your work for the Kingdom at home, do not forget its extension abroad. You are also commissioned to take some part in preaching the Gospel of Christ to all nations (Mtt. xxviii. 20.) If you cannot go yourself, support by your prayers and offerings those who have gone forth to do a great work which is yours as well as theirs.

"O Holy Ghost, Anointer come ;
Both Priest and people fill,
Till all the nations of the earth
Shall do their Father's will

Then to the Father and the Son,
And Thee Her songs of praise
One living undivided Church
Through endless years shall raise."